

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: CODEL FRASER VISITS AQUINO

BEGIN SUMMARY: SENATOR AQUINO TOLD CODEL FRASER APRIL 5 CHARGES AGAINST HIM ARE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. HE SAID HE IS READY TO DIE RATHER THAN GROVEL TO MARCOS AND WILL CONTINUE HIS HUNGER STRIKE TO THE DEATH. FACT THAT MARCOS PERMITTED CODEL VISIT AQUINO SUGGESTS PRESENT MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT HIS CASE AND THAT HE MAY BE THINKING OF HEARINGS AS WAY TO ESTABLISH RECORD OF AQUINO GUILT WITHOUT TRIAL OR AQUINO CONFESSION. END SUMMARY.

1. ON APRIL 5, CODEL FRASER ACCOMPANIED BY STAFFER SALZBERG, RICHARDSON AND EMBOFF VISITED SEN. AQUINO. AFTER CONGRESSMAN INDICATED PURPOSE OF VISIT TO PHILIPPINES, I.E., STUDY OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION, AQUINO LAUNCHED INTO LONG LEGAL REVIEW OF HIS CASE INCLUDING CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS APPREHENSION, CONFINEMENT AND HISTORY OF HIS VARIOUS SUPREME COURT EFFORTS. ACCOUNT FOLLOWED CLOSELY PRESENTATION HE MADE IN COURTROOM APRIL 4 (POUCHED EA/PHL). THRUST OF PRESENTATION WAS THAT HIS PROSECUTION ENTIRELY POLITICAL WITH MARCOS HIS SOLE ACCUSER, JUDGE, ETC. CODEL ASKED AQUINO DATES OF VARIOUS CHARGES. AQUINO SAID THEY WERE ALL PRE-MARTIAL LAW CHARGES. HE FREELY ADMITTED CONVERSATIONS WITH NPA MEMBERS BUT SAID THIS NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT HIS DUTIES AS GOVERNOR
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OF TARLAC.

2. AQUINO TOLD CODEL THAT AFTER ALMOST 2 1/2 YEARS OF CONFINEMENT HE WAS TIRED. "MARCOS HAD WON THE BALLGAME". HE WAS "READY TO DIE". THIS WAS A RIGHT EVERY MAN HAD AND HE WAS PREPARED TO EXERCISE IT. HE WILL TAKE TWO GLASSES OF WATER A DAY WITHOUT SALT AND EXPECTS TO LAST 30-45 DAYS. BY THE END OF MAY IT WILL "ALL BE OVER". AQUINO SAID HIS WIFE WAS IN HIS ROOM NOW CRYING AND ASKING WHAT WAS TO BECOME OF HER AND THEIR FIVE CHILDREN. AQUINO SAID IT IS A TOUGH DECISION BUT ONE HE MUST MAKE HIMSELF. HE HAS ASKED HIS MOTHER NOT TO VISIT HIM ANY FURTHER LESS THIS AFFECT HIS RESOLVE.

3. AQUINO SAID IT WAS CLEAR THAT MARCOS WANTED HIM TO "GROVEL". TERMING MARCOS A "BASTARD", AQUINO SAID HE WOULD NEVER GROVEL AND WOULD RATHER DIE. AQUINO DISCUSSED MARCOS' ACQUISITION OF POWER AND RICHES. HE ADMITTED, HOWEVER, SOME GOOD HAD COME FROM MARTIAL LAW. HE SPECIFIED PEACE AND ORDER SITUATION AND IMPROVED CLIMATE FOR INVESTMENTS.

4. AQUINO REFERRED TO THE LONG TERM US-PHILIPPINE RELATIONSHIP, STRESSING FILIPINO TENDENCY TO THINK ANYTHING STATE-SIDE "WAS GOOD". AQUINO SAID THIS IS WHY US FAILURE TO SPEAK OUT ON MARTIAL LAW WAS CONSTRUED AS AT LEAST TACIT APPROVAL OF MARCOS REGIME. AQUINO EMPHASIZED THAT MARTIAL LAW BUDGET GOING UP AND US MILITARY AID WAS SHORING UP INSTITUTION MARCOS USES TO CONTROL SOCIETY. ADVERTING TO US BASES, AQUINO SAID THAT THEY SERVED USEFUL PURPOSE AND SAVED FILIPINOS CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF DEFENSE EXPENDITURES. COMMENT: PRESUMABLY, HE WAS SUGGESTING THAT CUTBACK IN AID WOULD NOT PROMPT MARCOS TO ASK FOR BASE REMOVALS. END COMMENT.

5. AQUINO TOLD CODEL HE WELCOMED OPPORTUNITY TO MEET MEMBER OF US CONGRESS AND NOTED THIS WAS ONLY SECOND TIME SINCE HIS DETENTION HE HAD OPPORTUNITY MEET WITH FOREIGNER. AQUINO ASKED CODEL GIVE HIS REGARDS TO VARIOUS MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND SENATE WHOM HE HAD KNOWN IN HIS CAREER AS SENATOR. BECOMING SOMEWHAT MORE PHILOSOPHICAL, AQUINO SAID THAT NO ONE WAS TO BLAME FOR CURRENT SITUATION IN PHILIPPINES EXCEPT FILIPINOS THEMSELVES WHO HAD NEVER IMAGINED IN THEIR WILDEST DREAMS THAT MARCOS WOULD DO WHAT HE HAD DONE. CONFIDENTIAL

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AQUINO SAID FILIPINOS HAVE LOST THEIR VOICES AND THEIR COURAGE AND TALKED ABOUT MARCOS' "THOUSAND-YEAR REICH".

6. CODEL AND PARTY WERE USHERED TO COMPOUND WHERE AQUINO BEING CONFINED IMMEDIATELY UPON ARRIVAL AT FORT BONIFACIO. PHOTOGRAPHERS SNAPPED INNUMERABLE PICTURES OF VISITORS. INSIDE RECREATION ROOM THERE WERE SEVERAL CAMERAMEN (ORDINARY FILM AND VIDEO TAPE). ENTIRE SESSION APPEARS TO HAVE

BEEN FILMED, VIDEO TAPED AND RECORDED. DURING SESSION, AQUINO WAS OFFERED A COKE BUT REFUSED. TWO PLATES OF SANDWICHES WERE PLACED CONSPICUOUSLY ON TABLE, ONE IN FRONT OF SENATOR. NEWS OF CODEL'S VISIT TO AQUINO WAS NOT REPEAT NOT CARRIED IN PRESS.

7. COMMENT: CODEL REMARKED THAT HE WAS NOT CONCERNED WITH SUBSTANTIVE MERITS OF AQUINO CASE BUT SAID IT SEEMED THAT, PROCEDURALLY AT LEAST, AQUINO HAD RECEIVED UNFAIR TREATMENT. CODEL WAS IMPRESSED BY AQUINO'S ARTICULATENESS BUT SAID SENATOR HAD SPOKEN MUCH TOO FAST FOR HIM TO TAKE COMPLETE NOTES ON INTRICACIES OF HIS CASE.

8. AQUINO'S VITALITY MAKES IT HARD TO BELIEVE HE IS TRULY INTENT ON STARVING HIMSELF TO DEATH. HIS HUNGER STRIKE, HOWEVER, PUTS PRESIDENT UNDER PRESSURE ALTHOUGH FACT THAT PRESIDENT ALLOWED CODEL VISIT AQUINO SUGGESTS HE FEELS MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT CASE. WHILE IT IS HAZARDOUS TO SPECULATE ON MARCOS' INTENSIONS VIS-A-VIS AQUINO, WE NOTE THAT REGIME SPOKESMAN VALENCIA IN BULLETIN COLUMN APRIL 6 WRITES THAT WHILE IT LOOKS LIKE GOVERNMENT IS BEING VERY HARD ON AQUINO, HIS OWN VIEW IS MORE OPTIMISTIC. "I FEEL THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS ESTABLISHING PROOF AGAINST THESE PEOPLE SO THAT THEY CAN BE RELEASED OR PARDONED." VALENCIA SPECULATES THAT PRESIDENT WANTS CASE MADE TO SHOW GOVERNMENT DID NOT ACT ARBITRARILY. CODEL CONCLUDED SAME THING SEPARATELY AND WE THINK THERE IS LIKELIHOOD THAT MARCOS VIEWS THIS PROCEDURE AS REASONABLE ALTERNATIVE TO CONTINUING FRUITLESS EFFORTS TO GET ADMISSION OF GUILT FROM AQUINO EITHER BY CONFESSION OR BY TRIAL. WHAT FOLLOWS NEXT IN THIS GAME BETWEEN TWO SHREWD PUBLICISTS, HOWEVER, IS STILL OPEN QUESTION.
SULLIVAN

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